

Environmentally-Responsible Conferences, Meetings, & Events



Conferences, meetings, and events can generate vast amounts of wastes. For an environmentally-responsible group, this can be embarrassing to the conference sponsors and organizers, and can literally have a negative impact on an otherwise exciting event. These groups will appreciate a facility's commitment to the environment and its willingness to provide extraordinary customer service. Advertising of these services could prove to be a significant market edge for your facility! Best of all, many of these things are easy and will actually save you and the conference facility money!

Before the Event...

- **Have your event at a *Virginia Green* facility** or other facility that is environmentally-conscious and willing to accommodate your Green Meeting.
- **Conference information** should be provided electronically via e-mail or Internet site.
- **All Printed Materials** should be on **Recycled-Content Paper** that contains at least 30% post consumer material and is not chlorine bleached. **Double-side copying is a must!**
- **Contract with printers** who utilize pollution prevention techniques (e.g., **Soy-Based** and other less hazardous inks, energy-efficient equipment, and waste reducing practices).
- **Paper products** used by the supplier (writing paper, toilet paper, and tissues) have not been bleached with chlorine and contain at least 30% post-consumer content.
- Accurate **attendance** to service providers will reduce food and other conference wastes.
- **Electronic registration and check-out** by the hotel saves paper and energy.
- Choose facilities that **reduce transportation** requirements due to proximity to airport, local and public transit, or activities associated with conference.
- Provide participants with information on **public transportation**; or provide participants with "**public transportation tokens**" as part of their registration package to encourage the use of public transportation.
- Incorporate requirements for environmentally preferable products into **contracts with suppliers** of conference materials.
- **Green the Exhibitors & Vendors.** Encourage vendors to stay with the green theme and to minimize wasteful giveaways wherever possible.
- Utilize **reusable crates or cartons** when transporting supplies to reduce packaging materials.
- **Hotel information** can be provided to guests electronically or at least using double-sided copying.
- **Green Energy.** Consider purchasing "**Green Tags**" or "**Renewable Energy Certificates**" to offset the additional costs of using energy from renewable sources to power your conference. See <http://www.green-e.org/>.
- Ensure that a **training** program is in place to inform the workers of the facility's "greening" policies. Your green event needs to "**walk the green walk**".
- **Talk the Green Talk.** Let your participants know that you have made an effort to minimize the environmental impacts of your event.

The Facility...

- **Optional towel and linen service** should be offered by hotel; and staff should be properly instructed.
- The hotel's **laundry service** delivers dry cleaning in reusable bags made with recycled material.



- **Bulk Dispensers for Toiletries.** Encourage the use of refillable dispensers for toiletries (e.g., hand and shower soap, shampoo, conditioner, hand lotion); or if facility provides toiletries in small quantities, encourage the facility to replace the containers only when they are empty or for a new guest.
- **Energy Efficiency.** Encourage the use of energy efficient lighting & sensors should be encouraged. The use of **compact fluorescents** in rooms and in recessed “can-lights” is a good sign that your facility is doing what is practical to reduce energy costs. Also, facilities should be recycling all fluorescent lamps.
- Energy efficient and electronically controlled **heating & air conditioning** saves energy and money.
- Publicly available **copiers** should have double-side copying option.
- **Recycling** for all recyclable materials should be available and collected in **meeting and guest rooms**. Determine if containers are provided in rooms to collect recyclable materials, including paper, plastic, glass, and aluminum. Collection bins conveniently located for other, less common materials.
- **Information** should be available to guests to explain what is collected.
- **Water-Conservation.** Low-flow toilets and water fixtures save water and there are many opportunities in landscaping, food service, and laundry.
- Restrooms are equipped with **air dryers** to reduce the use of paper towels.

During...

- **Clean-up crews** should be trained to recycle all recyclable materials from conferences, receptions, etc.
- Ensure **recycling areas** are well marked and displayed throughout the facility and are easily accessible.
- Reusable **serving containers and table cloths** should be used.
- **No Styrofoam!** Use coffee mugs, but otherwise use paper or biodegradable materials for disposable cups and take-out containers.
- Ensure **reusable dishes, silverware, and napkins** are provided for conference participants. If not practical, encourage use of bio-degradable disposables, which are now readily available for approximately the same costs.
- **Avoid use of boxed lunches** to reduce generation of waste materials.
- Provide **water and other beverages in pitchers** or other bulk dispensers.

Post...

- Assess program and identify potential **improvements** and suggestions.
- Provide **conference proceedings** electronically via e-mail, Internet site or on CD-ROM.

For additional ideas, go to <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/greenmeetings/>

For more information on the Virginia Green Lodging program, contact:

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